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DEPT FOR AF A A/S CARTER, AF/SPG, AF/C  
NSC FOR MGAVIN AND CHUDSON  
ADDIS ABABA FOR USAU  
DEPT PLS PASS USAID FOR AFR/SUDAN

SENSITIVE  
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SUBJECT: DARFUR CALM BUT TENSE AHEAD OF MARCH 4 ICC ANNOUNCEMENT

11. (SBU) Summary: Darfur is calm but tense ahead of the March 4 ICC announcement. Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) leaders are actively warning IDPs against engaging in any public celebrations in response to the expected ICC indictment of President Bashir. At the same time, they express confidence that UNAMID Formed Police Units (FPU) will provide sufficient security for IDP camps. Civilian and military authorities are planning a pro-government mass rally and public parade of weapons through El Fasher tomorrow. UNAMID has been coordinating closely on March 2-3 with Darfuri officials in advance of the announcement. At the moment, no rebel movement is poised to attack any of Darfur's capitals, but a dispute in an El Fasher market on March 2 resulted in two civilians killed and eight injured, and led civilians to pelt the Wali of North Darfur with stones and shout support for the ICC. End summary.

12. (SBU) Although the scene of some violence in the market on March 2, El Fasher the capital of North Darfur, was calm on March 3 according to various sources. UN Department of Safety and Security (UNDSS) anticipates no particular outbreaks of violence following the ICC announcement, but has advised UN and NGO personnel to maintain a low profile and to avoid unnecessary movements. In response to tomorrow's expected International Criminal Court (ICC) announcement of an arrest warrant against Sudanese President Omar Al-Bashir, El Fasher civilian and military authorities are planning a series of pro-government rallies and parades of weaponry. Ahmed Adam Yousif, director of the independent NGO Ajaweed, said government employees, student unions and members of the Popular Defense Forces will be coerced to take part in a "condemnation rally" tomorrow in El Fasher, and SLM/MM-aligned politician Ahmed Hassan Bahar expressed a common sentiment from his office in El Fasher, saying, "I don't know what the situation will be in Darfur generally, but it will not be good."

13. (SBU) According to UNDSS Chief Frazer King, approximately 15 armed Arab militia fighters came to El Fasher on March 2 to receive training and funds from the Central Reserve Police, but were short-changed following their training, and began to steal from locals in the El Mawashi market area. Confronted by local traders, the militia discharged their weapons in the crowded market, killing two Darfuris and injuring three. Local sources confirmed that the Wali of North Darfur Othman Mohamed Kibir visited the injured at a local hospital following the shootings, prompting some residents to gather in front of the building, throwing stones as the Wali emerged, and shouting slogans in support of the International Criminal Court (ICC).

14. (SBU) IDP leaders appear concerned that spontaneous celebrations and tribal dancing within the camps may provoke a harsh GOS reaction, but expressed confidence that UNAMID Formed Police Units (FPU) would offer some protection in a worst-case scenario. Ahmed Atim Osman, community leader at the Al Salaam IDP camp in North Darfur, said he and his fellow chieftains are discouraging gatherings and asking IDPs to keep quiet following the ICC

announcement. He added that the UNAMID Indonesian FPU's, which patrol the perimeter of the camp, have increased security, in turn providing IDPs with a level of relative safety within the camps that had been previously lacking. Abu Al Bashar, a Fur leader in the Abu Shouk IDP camp near El Fasher, told emboff, "The situation in Abu Shouk is calm, and IDPs are confident in the protection provided by UNAMID. The decision will result in a government protest, but the IDPs will keep calm and silent even though they support the ICC decision."

15. (SBU) Hideo Ikebe, civil affairs officer at UNAMID headquarters in El Fasher, acknowledged that tension remains high throughout Darfur, but does not believe that rebel movements will take advantage of the date to organize an offensive on one of Darfur's three capitals. "No rebel group has enough military strength now to launch an attack," said Ikebe, adding that the recent claim by notorious janjaweed leader Musa Hilal that he has 30,000 militia fighters poised to defend the National Congress Party (NCP) was as unrealistic as the claims by Khalil Ibrahim that he intends to personally arrest President Bashir. Suleiman Marjan, a rebel leader with SLA/Abdulwahid, predicted a strong government reaction against rebel movements in the next few days, cautioning: "We raised the level of precaution because we expect the government to attack us in our areas of control when the decision is announced."

16. (SBU) UNAMID Joint Special Representative Rodolphe Adada told CDA Fernandez on March 3 in Meroe that he and his deputy had spent the past two days meeting with the Walis of Darfur's three states as well as NISS, SAF and HAC officials there. Ever the optimist, Adada said that Sudanese officials assured him that they would maintain cooperation with UNAMID and that there would be no pre-emptive attacks on IDP camps by security forces. CDA reminded Adada of the

KHARTOUM 00000297 002 OF 002

August 25 Kalma Camp massacre when security forces informed UNAMID 30 minutes (at most) before an attack which killed 33 people. Adada responded that such an attack could not happen now "because we are there." He also downplayed reports of regime harassment of international NGOs in Darfur.

17. (SBU) Comment: Doomsday scenarios predicting violence in Darfur immediately following the ICC announcement appear somewhat far-fetched at the moment; indeed March 4 may pass as quietly as July 14, 2008 when ICC Prosecutor Moreno-Ocampo announced he was requesting an indictment against Bashir. However, the full implications of the expected announcement by the ICC to issue an arrest warrant for the President will play out over time and tensions are high throughout Sudan. Rebel leaders are likely to take up the banner of international justice as the reason for disruptive assaults across Darfur. For the moment, JEM appears to have fully withdrawn into Chad so we don't expect any immediate assaults on government installations or forces (other rebel groups are mostly in defensive positions at this point and have little capacity to project force - even JEM cannot hold territory and resorts to launching transitory attacks.) GOS forces and allied militia have been steadily consolidating their control in Darfur over the last several months (ironically, the JEM attack in January helped the regime in this regard), making the full and complete deployment of UNAMID, especially the valuable IDP-protecting FPU's, ever more essential. For IDP leaders to voice confidence in the UNAMID FPU's is an important development, a rare public relations victory for a peacekeeping mission in desperate need of local support.

FERNANDEZ